

Reedy in a Strong Wind

President Seeks a New Press Secretary To Improve His Public Image

CPYRGHT

By Rowland Evans and Robert Novak

PRESIDENT Johnson is closer than ever before to replacing George Reedy as Press Secretary.

Ever since Reedy succeeded Pierre Salinger a little more than a year ago, there have been rumors that he was on the way out. Now, more than rumor is involved.

Mr. Johnson has been quietly scouting around for a new Press Secretary, both inside and outside his present staff. A prime candidate is the highly capable Bill D. Moyers, Mr. Johnson's top assistant on policy matters who acted as manager, planner and chief spokesman for Mr. Johnson in the 1960 political wars.

Some students of the President doubt that anyone can really excel as Press Secretary for him. Reedy, a man of charm and erudition, is hamstrung by lack of information and authority. He is not kept informed and therefore cannot inform.

But Mr. Johnson is preoccupied with his less-than-ecstatic public image. Shortly after his election last Nov. 3 by one of the greatest land-slides in American history, Mr. Johnson asked old friends in New York City to recommend a public relations firm to help improve that image.

The fact that he now is seriously pondering changing his Press Secretary reflects the same desire.

PERHAPS THE biggest riddle in town is who will succeed John McCone as head of the Central Intelligence Agency. The list of

possibilities now has grown to 30 or more. But a final choice still eludes President Johnson and his personnel chief, John Macy.

Along the way, the job has been turned down by several prospects, including Deputy Secretary of Defense Cyrus Vance. Another leading possibility, former Deputy Defense Secretary Roswell Gilpatric, now a New York lawyer, was unacceptable to powerful Democrats on Capitol Hill — specifically Sen. John L. McClellan of Arkansas.

The congressional antipathy for Gilpatric goes back to the long and acrimonious Senate hearings conducted by McClellan on the TFX fighter-bomber during which Gilpatric successfully defended the Pentagon's choice of General Dynamics instead of Boeing as the prime contractor.

Still another prospect is Gen. Maxwell Taylor, now the United States Ambassador in South Viet-Nam. Taylor's feud with Gen. Khanh, who assumed power last month over Taylor's strong protest, may have damaged his position in Saigon.

One major problem in finding a successor to McCone: The job seriously limits future Government roles for anyone who takes it. No man who has run the CIA could be considered for a top State Department post later, or even for some of the choicest ambassadorial posts abroad. Once a spy, always a spy in the minds of foreign diplomats.

DISENCHANTED WITH Barry Goldwater, grass roots conservatives are turning with favor to actor Ronald Reagan. Based on Reagan's television spiel for the Goldwater-Miller ticket last fall, they regard him as one conservative who would wage the hard-hitting campaign they expected but didn't get from Goldwater.

For instance, Indiana Republicans will go to any lengths to get Reagan as speaker for their annual \$100-a-plate fund raising dinner. They even are willing to postpone the dinner until summer if need be.

But the Hoosier enthusiasm is nothing compared to the way conservatives feel about Reagan in neighboring Illinois. Borrowing a page from Robert F. Kennedy's book, they want Californian Reagan to run for the United States Senate from Illinois in 1966 (based on Reagan's Illinois background).

More likely, Reagan will run for the Republican nomination for Governor of California against George Christopher, former Mayor of San Francisco and a leader of California liberal Republicans. Political pros there call it a toss-up.

A footnote: Christopher probably would get support from the old Nixon organization in a race against Reagan. His running mate as Lieutenant Governor may be Robert Finch, Nixon's former assistant and one of the most astute political managers in California.

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